

Stranger Things in Stranger Times by LovelySheree

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Summary: The party has faced a lot of strange things over the years. From rightside-up to the upside-down, these kids had thought they'd seen it all. That is, until they turned up in Hawkins Indiana twelve years into the future and have no idea how to get back. (Mostly adventure and friendship genre, but there may be some fluff-filled moments later on. [Cannon parings])

1. Chapter 1

Welcome all to my newest addition to incomplete stories! Please be warned-spoilers will be ahead (so far, nothing major in this chapter).

Summery: The party has faced a lot of strange things over the years. From rightside-up to the upside-down, these kids had thought they'd seen it all. That is, until they turned up in Hawkins Indiana twelve years into the future and have no idea how to get back.

Stranger Things and Stranger Times

They were nerds. Overall, complete nerds. And they knew that, they were okay with it. However, even with their vast extent of scientific knowledge, they were at a lost. In fact, they found themselves at a lose for explanations often these days. Thus, they were forced to look at the situation through a much more fictional lens: D&D.

Not that they were complaining.

"Temporal Prime," Dustin announced proudly, "That's what's happening here." Mike shared a look of awe with the party's bard, leaving Lucas to look strangely between them.

"What are you talking about? 'Temporal Prime?' What even *is* that?" Lucas asked, looking past their group to stare dizzily ahead. What had they gotten themselves into this time?

"It's a time travel spell," Mike quickly explained, "Basically, if each separate time line is like a... a river in space, then it's possible to time travel to any time-line-river that's directly adjacent to your own time line—"

"Temporal Prime is actually a separate plane of its own," Dustin amended, interrupting Mike. "It's, as Mike said, a place where there are endless rivers of different times. But, it can be accessed and used as a vehicle to travel through time and space. Thus, time travel!" he announced, throwing his arms in the air and gesturing to the scene

around them.

To the normal eye, all seemed well. It was a peaceful day in Hawkins the sun was out, a few clouds speckled the sky, there was the slightest of breezes that gave a great sense of peace. However, to the eyes of six kids, it was anything *but* a normal day in Hawkins Indiana. A billboard hovered over a nearby gas station, advertising the strangest of things.

Hawkins High's Homecoming on September 24th, year 1996.

"No way, you guys. That's... impossible. I know we've seen some super crazy shit, but time travel? There's absolutely *no way*." Max crossed her arms, looking around at everyone. Her face fell when they didn't respond. "You don't actually believe this... do you?" she dared to ask.

"Well, why else would there be a billboard advertising something that's 12 years into the future?" Dustin questioned, as if the answer was obvious.

Will shrugged at Max, "I mean, we've seen some weird stuff," he said.

Max shook her head, "This is insane."

"Insane?" El piped up from behind them, looking curious.

"It's another word for crazy," Mike told her.

"Really crazy," Max added.

Lucas heaved a sigh, "So what now?" he asked no one in specific, "How do we get back?"

"The better question is: how'd we get here in the first place?" Dustin said as they all looked slowly towards a certain mage.

El raised her eyebrows and pointed to herself. "Me?" she asked.

"Well, considering you're the only one who has super powers here," Lucas crossed his arms, leaving the rest unsaid.

Mike reached for El's arm, "Did you do anything? Even if you didn't mean to?" he asked carefully, making sure to not squeeze her arm too tightly.

Eleven shook her head. "No. I didn't," she said, "I promise."

Will tilted his head in thought, "Maybe you don't know that you did anything... Let's say *if* you *did* do something, how would we get back? Have you ever done anything like this before?"

El seemed to think about what Will had suggested, but it only took a moment for her to shake her head again. "No," she repeated.

"So if it wasn't El, then what? How'd we get here?" Max asked.

They all fell quiet. How *had* they gotten here? Last they remembered, they were playing a game of tag in the woods. Then, suddenly, there was this terrible high-pitched noise, causing them all to collapse to the ground and cover their ears in pain. When it passed and they opened their eyes, they had thought nothing of it. Just a strange occurrence. Just another thing. But as they wondered back towards the main road, they were greeted by a very odd billboard.

"I mean, it *is* just a billboard," Will said optimistically, breaking the quiet spell. "It could just be a misprint," he suggested.

"Misprint? Really, Will? Did it just appear out of thin air, too? I swear on my life, that billboard was *not* there when we were here earlier today," Dustin fired back.

Will gave a half-hearted shrug, looking sideways, "I guess not."

"So if we don't know how to get back, what are we suppose to do? Stand here and starve?" Mike asked the party with a scoff.

Eleven's eyes widened in worry at Mike's proposal, unable to hear the sarcasm in it. Innocently, but intentionally, she grabbed Mike's hand (and his attention). "No," she shook her head.

Mike sighed, offering her a sweet half-smile. "I was only being sarcastic," he said, "It was a joke."

El gave him an incredulous look, glancing at the group around them, then focusing back on him. "But it wasn't funny," she stated simply.

At this, the entire party exchanged looks of mild surprise, then all bursted into a fit of laughter. "Not even your girlfriend thinks your funny!" Lucas cackled. El had joined in the laughter, although, she was still confused.

Mike's face flared with anger, "She's not—!" but it was short lived. He sighed. Right now, that doesn't matter. What *does* matter, was figuring out what their next course of action would be. Speaking over their laughter, he gets their attention. "What if we wonder around? We could figure out what's actually going on," he spoke.

"I'm okay with that," Will sided with Mike, a huge smile still split across his face from laughing.

Mike gave him an annoyed look, and Will tucked in his lips to hide his smile. "Anyone got a problem with wondering around?" Mike spoke, trying to change the subject.

Their laughter slowly died and, soon, they all nodded in agreement.

They walked to the road, walking past the billboard and the gas station, continuing down the cracked road. "Do you guys remember this road being this bad?" Will asked, kicking at the road as they walked.

"I don't. And I thought Mirkwood had a bad pavement job," Dustin said in agreement.

Within a half-hour, they had begun to pass their first houses, entering the suburbs of Hawkins. They all stared in shock at the cars that were parked in the driveways. They were slicker, newer, and definitely not 80s. But, that's about all there was to notice. There were no crazy changes in the town so far. Everything else looked the same. Nothing out of the ordinary.

That is, until they reached Mike's house.

"Wow, your house hasn't changed a bit," Dustin looked up at place where they had held thousands of epic D&D campaigns.

"No houses have changed," Mike pointed out, looking around them.

"I double dog dare you to knock on the door," Max said, a grin splitting across her face.

Mike's face practically recoiled in indignation. "What? No way! My parents will answer and then find *me* from ten years ago—"

"Twelve years ago," Dustin corrected.

"Sure, twelve, whatever. The point is, I'm *not* knocking on that door," Mike said with resolve.

"Scaredy-cat," Max smirked.

"Yeah, well, curiosity *killed* that cat, and I'm not looking to die anytime soon," Mike crossed his arms.

El looked up at Mike, grabbing his arm. "Sarcasm?" she tested the word.

Mike nodded, "Yeah, kinda," he said while shrugging. "If you're so keen on getting us into trouble, why not *you* knock on the door, Max?" Mike dared her.

Before Max could even answer, the front door to the Wheeler house opened. They stood, frozen, in the middle of the road as they watched a young blond leave the house. Her eyes were focused on the ground, watching where she stepped. When she looked up, however, her eyes landed on the group of six kids standing in the middle of the road.

She peered at them, "What are you kids doing here?" she asked.

However old this girl was, she was old enough to drive. She was grabbing her keys out of her bag, clicking a button and opening the car door, still looking at them curiously.

"U-um," Mike stuttered out, "Nothing."

The girl looked closer at them, "You know, you guys remind me of some people I know," she said.

At this, Dustin just started laughing nervously, "Us? Really?" he said as if it were crazy.

"Who... lives here?" Mike asked the girl. As he continued to look at her from the road where they stood, he noticed she began to look more and more familiar. As if he were suppose to know her.

"Why do you need to know?" she asked back cautiously.

Max stepped up, grabbing El's hand and gesturing to herself and El. "We're selling cookies, and we were looking for a certain family. The Wheelers. Know them by chance?" Max asked.

The girl crossed her arms, "You're in luck. This is it," she gestured with her thumb to the house behind her. "I'm Holly Wheeler, by the way," she introduced herself.

At her introduction, they all gaped at her.

She closed the car door she had opened and slowly walked closer to them. "You know, you guys actually look *really* familiar," she observed, "What are your names?"

None of them answered, none of them dared. None except a certain girl who happened to have super-powers. El pointed to herself, smiling shyly. "I'm Jane," she said, using her legal name.

Something seemed to click behind the girl's eyes—behind *Holly's* eyes—and she nearly stumbled backwards. "Your shitting me," she breathed under her breath, eyes blown wide.

I have an addiction to time-travel stories, I know. I know, I know, I know. In any case, I hope you all enjoyed the story! I'll update soon. Stranger Things has really got me hooked!

Hope you enjoyed,

LovelySheree

2. Chapter 2

Don't expect two uploads a day as a regular thing... this is an exception.

Chapter 2

"*Mike?*" Holly looked at her older, yet obviously younger, brother. "Am I dreaming?" she mused, reaching forward and pinching Mike's cheek. Mike made a noise in protest, but she didn't seem to notice. "You look like your twelve years old!" she exclaimed, looking at the rest of the group.

"*Thirteen.* We're thirteen," Dustin corrected.

Lucas punched his arm, "Who cares about how old we are—our cover's blown!"

Dustin punched him back, "Then, it doesn't matter now, right, smart-ass?"

Holly looked at them all as if she were seeing ghosts. "I... How... is this some kind of trick? Did Mike put you up to this? Did he find some crazy accurate doppelgängers or something?" she asked, continuing to poke and prod at Mike's face.

"I'm right here!" Mike shoved her hand away, annoyed. "Stop touching me," he said. She withdrew her hand and Mike gave her a steady look. "So... your my little sister... twelve years into the future?" he asked.

Lucas seemed to register something as he pulled Mike away from Holly. "Mike!" he whispered harshly, "I don't think it's a smart idea to talk to her."

Mike frowned and furrowed his eyebrows, "Why not? She's my sister."

"The timeline, dumbass, it could screw with our future!" Lucas shook his shoulders.

Mike shoved him off, rolling his eyes. "No it won't. We're from the past. Worse comes to worse we see something we aren't suppose to know about. And I'm pretty sure we've survived from seeing things we *weren't suppose to know about*," Mike said.

Dustin nodded in agreement, "There's not much consequence, honestly. We can't screw anything up."

"I feel like time traveling to the future isn't that simple," Will said skeptically. They all glanced back towards Holly who was making strange, but seemingly civil, conversation with Max and El.

"But it is," Dustin announces, "The River of Time is resistant to change. We're not in the future of our own world, but rather, a future of a parallel world. Nothing we do here will or can effect our own world."

"River of Time?" Will asks curiously, "What's that?"

"Just the time-rivers that Mike and I were talking about earlier," Dustin said, "Like the ones in Temporal Prime."

Lucas shook his head, opening his mouth to say something when he was interrupted.

"So you guys are actually from the past!?" Holly took a sudden step back, causing Will, Dustin, Lucas, and Mike to turn around from their conversation.

Max and El looked back at the boys as if they had misspoken.

"I thought that was obvious," Mike said dully.

Holly's eyes widened even further (if that was possible), "There's *no* way," she kept saying over and over, "I-I'm calling Mike."

"I'm right here!" Mike waved in frustration.

"No—the *real* Mike," she stressed. She dug through her bag, pulling out a strange looking device. The kids all looked at her with silent curiosity, watching her press a series of buttons and putting it to her ear.

Dustin's eyes widened as he pointed to the object, "Is that a phone?" he whispered in wonder to the party. Lucas and Mike shrugged in response.

"M-mike?" Holly suddenly spoke. The party craned their necks to try and hear the voice on the other line. They could only make out a low grumble. "No, no, I'm fine... Why am I calling, then? Well, I'll tell you why—...I don't care if you're in a meeting... Oh, it's important? Well so is this!... Then make up some excuse and *quick!*... Yes... Uh-huh, Mom and Dad's... Yes and come *quick*... Okay, bye."

With that, she took what the party could only assume was a phone away from her face, pressing a red button and putting it back into her purse. "I swear, if my parents weren't out of town for the weekend, you'd all be in deep shit," she said to them, crossing her arms.

"Deep shit?" El echoed, confused and slightly disgusted.

"Trouble. It means trouble," Mike offered.

Holly looked between the two of them, bewildered. "You've never heard that, Jane? That's surprising considering who your Dad is," Holly scoffed.

"Papa?" El's eyes widened.

Mike leaned forward, whispering in her ear, "I think she means Hopper." El visibly relaxed at the realization and nodded in understanding.

Holly looked back to the house. "Well, I called Mike," she said seriously. "He'll be here in a few minutes. If you guys are joking about this, then he'll know and I'll call the cops—"

"Don't get your panties into a wad," Max waved her hand towards Holly, dismissing her threat. "Why would we joke about this?"

"You started off by saying you were selling cookies," Holly pointed out flatly, "Fairly sure that was a lie."

Max rolled her eyes, "So?"

"Whatever," Holly sighed sharply, nodding towards the door. "Well, you guys may as well come inside. That way the neighbors won't get suspicious," she said.

They all followed Holly into the house. Butterflies began to surface in Mike's stomach. Honestly, he wasn't sure if he wanted any of this to happen. Sure, traveling to the future seems like a pretty cool concept, but to actually live it? That's another thing. Soon, he'd be face to face with himself, but not himself; Mike plus twelve years. What is he like?

Suddenly, he felt his arm being pulled softly and a hand reaching down to hold his own. He looked to his right to find El smiling comfortingly at him. "Don't worry," she said, "Mike will always be Mike." It was such a simple thought, but it helped Mike relax.

"Right," he smiled back. "You sure you can't read thoughts?" he laughed lightly.

She shook her head, "I can't. But I can read you," she said.

Mike blushed, looking away. "I-is that so?" he said as they walked through the doorway.

They were greeted by something that felt oddly familiar. Over the years, the house must've been repainted. A few areas where wall paper used to be now had a fresh coat of creamy white. Almost all the furniture had been replaced, leaving the house with an odd sense of alienation. It was the same, no doubt about that, but it was also very different.

Holly noticed their looks of awe and crossed her arms over her chest. "You guys better not steal anything," she look pointedly at them all.

Silently, Mike wandered towards the basement entrance, followed by the rest of the party. He reached for the handle, opening it up and peering down the stairs. It was dark, but for the most part, the only things he could make out were boxes on boxes of who knows what. That's all that was there. Tucked away in a corner, he could make out the outline of the table that they played hours of D&D on.

"Well that's different," Dustin spoke from behind Mike, startling him.

"Shit, Dustin, give a little warning, next time!" he said, abruptly closing the basement door.

Dustin laughed, "Sorry, did I scare ya?"

Mike pushed past him grouchily, "No, just surprised me, is all."

Will tilted his head upwards, staring at the ceiling. "I wonder how much your room's changed," he thought out-loud.

This caused Mike, Dustin, Lucas, and Will to rush towards the entry way and up the stairs. Max and El followed slowly behind.

"Hey—you guys better not go snooping!" Holly yelled, running up the stairs after them all.

"It's *my* room," Mike yelled back in frustration.

He opened the door to his room and peeked his head inside curiously. Inside was his bed, still twin-sized but with a different, dark-blue comforter. Unlike the basement, there were only a few boxes stacked in the corner of the room. There was a bookshelf—different than the one he had—littered with books, plaques, and trophies. Beside the bookshelf and near the window was an empty desk and a swivel chair.

Max sighed behind them, "Boring," she said, "There's nothing in here."

"Well, no duh. Mike doesn't even live here anymore, he's 25," Holly said matter-of-factly.

"What about the other rooms?" Max asked, backing away from the group and venturing towards the other doors, flanked by Lucas and Dustin.

"Hey! Where are you guys going?" Holly asked, following them.

Mike walked into his room, or what should be his room, and sat on the bed. El followed silently, while Will stayed in the doorway, still looking around.

"This is weird," Will spoke up.

Mike scoffed, "No kidding."

El plopped herself down next to Mike on the bed, her feet swinging just above the floor. "What now?" she asked quietly.

"I don't know. I guess we wait for 'future-Mike' to get here," Will said, crossing his arms. "But I'm not sure how much help that'll be."

"What do you mean?" Mike asked, looking up at his friend.

Will shrugged, "I mean, what's he gonna know that we don't? I know he's you and he's an adult now, but I don't think people learn about time-travel just by growing up."

Mike nodded, "You make a good point," he laughed lightly.

Suddenly there was a knock at the front door as it opened up, followed by footsteps. "Holly? Hello?" A voice called from below.

From another room, Holly yelled back, "Mike, you're here!"

"I swear, Holly, this better be good," the low voice, allegedly future-Mike, replied.

Holly raced down the hall and Mike, Will and El watched her figure flash past the bedroom door. Will leaned off the doorframe and slowly followed Holly. Dustin, Lucas, and Max were close behind him.

Mike stood up from the bed and El gripped his hand again. "Mike is Mike," she reminded him, "No matter what."

He smiled down at her, helping her off the bed. "Right," he said, "Thanks, El." They walked out of the room, looking to find the party grouped at the top of the stairwell, staring at the front door. Or rather, what stood in its way.

No words were spoken as Mike pushed his way through the group, his eyes meeting dark brown ones. "Whoa..." they said at the same time.

"See, what did I tell you? Is this good enough for you?" Holly asked, standing next to the man in the doorway. Standing next to future-Mike.

Bum bum buuum. Hopefully you enjoyed-please feel free to leave a comment and/or suggestion in the box below!

Until next time,
LovelySheree

3. Chapter 3

NOTE: Thanks for all of the support so far, you guys! I'm enjoying writing this one! If anyone has a suggestion on anything, feel free to give it to me. Currently, I'm researching basic theories of time-travel to get a solid understanding of *what* exactly, I'm writing about. Again, feel free to shoot any suggestions my direction. Otherwise, enjoy the story and leave a review below if you enjoyed it! (Or if you didn't, I guess...)

I hope you enjoy!

Chapter 3

He was tall. That's all Mike could process. It almost looked like he doubled Holly's size. The man (a stranger who vaguely looked like himself) held the door open behind him, frozen in place as his eyes met Mike's. As much as Mike wanted to talk, even to will his lungs to take in a breath, he couldn't.

Finally, the silence was broken. *He* spoke. "I'm not entirely sure you should label this as 'good,' Holly," the man spoke, looking down at the blond.

"Yeah, 'cause *that's* what I should be worried about, right now. *My choice of wording!* Mike, would you care to explain why there are a group of kids in our house who happen to look just like you and your cronies when you were *thirteen!*?" Holly fumed.

The man frowned at her, "Hey, this isn't *our* house, I moved out years ago—"

"Mike! Again, *not* the point! Why are these kids inside this house!?" she stressed.

He seemed annoyed, now. "Why should *I* know?" the man, the older Mike, sighed at his sister. He looked back to the, still frozen, group of children collected at the top of the stairwell. Peering at them, he crossed his arms; the sleeves of his baggy sweater inching up his slim,

but somewhat toned, forearms. "Is this some kind of joke?" he asked them.

Dustin, the first of the kids to speak, scoffed. "How on earth could this be a joke? Do you *honestly* think this is a joke? With every inch you grew did you grow stupid as well?" he asked.

The older Mike's eyes grew wide, letting his arms fall to his side, "Nope, you can't be joking. You're definitely Dustin, through and through."

"You're just accepting this?" Holly hissed at her brother, smacking his arm.

"Well what am I suppose to do? It's fairly clear to me," he shrugged, "Time travel's not totally unrealistic considering what's happened to us throughout the years."

Holly looked to the kids at the top of the stairs, then back to her older brother, "Are you serious?"

"As a heart-attack," Max mumbled under her breath from the stairs, pushing her way past the group and past a, still, shell-shocked and much younger Mike. "Look, it's not like we came here on purpose. And we'd like to get back before Dinner. Any plans?" she asked.

"How about we sit down, yeah?" the older Mike asked, gesturing to the home's living-room, "Then we might be able to figure something out." The older Mike looked to Holly, "Do you mind going to your room or something? They may be less honest with you around..." he pointed out, glancing at the kids who were beginning to file down the staircase.

Holly sighed, putting up her hands. "No complaints here. I'm suppose to meet my friends for a school group-project," she said, glancing at the clock that hung on the wall. "Shit, I'm already super late!" she yelped, racing to the front door. Before she left, she turned around, eyeing everyone in the house, "Nothing too crazy better happen... My parents finally allowed me to stay at home by myself for the weekend."

Will looked at her, slightly sympathetic. "No promises..." he winced with a smile.

She blinked slowly, turning around. "Right," she said, leaving and closing the door behind her.

"Where's she going?" Lucas asked, confused.

The older Mike, now sitting on a couch near a T.V. set, gestured to them all. "I figured you'd be a bit more on guard with her around, is all. Considering Holly doesn't know... *everything* that's happened."

"...Oh," was all Lucas could reply.

A terribly awkward pause fell upon the room like an itchy blanket, causing their skin to crawl with un-comfort and unease.

Mostly due to the fact that Mike, the younger Mike, was just standing —half-way in the entry and half-way in the living-room—and *staring* at the older Mike. Even El had wondered with the rest of the group into the living room, sitting on the floor and up against the couch with her legs crossed. Lucas, Max, and Dustin occupied the couch across from "older Mike" and above Eleven, while Will was sitting next to El on the floor. But Mike. He just was staring.

What made it even worse? The older Mike was staring right back. No words were spoken.

"Can you guys, like... communicate in your heads or something since you're the same people but from different times?" Dustin asked, breaking the silence.

Both Mikes whipped their heads towards the curly-haired boy with an exasperated look. "No," they said in unison.

Everyone raised their eyebrows at this, looking between the two Mikes in surprise. El stifled a laugh. "Mike is Mike," she said softly, earning a few laughs from those around her. The younger Mike just rolled his eyes, finally stepping fully into the living room and taking a seat beside El on the floor.

Lucas pointed to the older Mike with an amused smirk. "Why are you

wearing such a baggy sweater? What are you, an old man?" Lucas asked the older Mike, snickering.

The older Mike looked down at himself and at the sweater he wore. It was indeed baggy. It was a crimson red and made of a thick knitted fabric. Something a grandfather would wear, without question. If you asked anyone, sweaters were *nerdy*. They were for "mama's boys" or "I-never-moved-out-of-my-parent's-basement weirdos." Which, although nerdy, Mike was none of those things.

Then again, if you asked Nancy, he fit the "old man" part pretty well. But hey, it wasn't *his* fault he was broody and grouchy every once in a while... or had a strange habit of jingling spare change in his pocket.

Truth be told, he only wore sweaters because a certain someone loved to hug him when he was wearing them. And would occasionally steal them to wear during colder mornings.

"It's," the older Mike searched for words while fighting a blush, "It's a style now," he decided.

"Sure it is," Lucas nodded, "Whatever it takes to help you sleep at night."

The older Mike frowned while the younger Mike leaned back to slug his friend in the leg.

"Stop focusing on the *sweater*, Lucas! We have an actual problem, here," the younger Mike grunted, settling back to his previous position next to El.

"I like sweaters," El said simply, looking between the two Mikes. "They're soft," she smiled.

"O-oh, really?" the younger Mike blushed.

The older Mike's eyes fell onto Eleven. His eyes softened and he leaned further back into the couch he sat on. To change the subject, he cleared his throat. "So," he began, "What's happened so far?"

"What do you mean by that? What's happened since we got into this

time, or what?" Max asked, her arms crossed.

The older Mike sighed, "I was referring to what's happened in your time. What crazy shit has gone down in Hawkins so far?"

The group all exchanged looks of uncertainty. Where to start? There was so much but it was all so hard to explain. Although, considering they were talking to someone who had gone through it, perhaps it'd be a bit easier to put words to.

"Well," the younger Mike frowned, thinking carefully. "El just closed the gate," he said, wrapping it all up into one simple sentence.

"And the Snow Ball already happened, I assume? Considering she's out and about with you guys," the older Mike observed.

Eleven nodded, smiling broadly, "Yes."

"Why do you ask?" Will tilted his head, "To make sure we don't find out anything that we shouldn't?" he asked.

The older Mike shook his head. "Not necessarily," he started, "I mean, I'm obviously gonna keep *some* things secret from you guys. So, partly, yes. But I asked so that I could get a read on exactly... *how* you all ended up here."

"You mean, you haven't experienced this yourself?" Max asked, confused. "I thought you were Mike in the future, and Mike's sitting right there," she pointed to the raven-haired boy. Before the older Mike could jump at a proper explanation, Dustin already was answering.

"You see, Max, we traveled to a different time-line completely—not necessarily to *our own* future. Remember when Mike and I talked about the rivers before?" Dustin asked and Max nodded, "Our river of time is separate from this river of time. While it's technically possible to swim up and down stream in our own time, that doesn't seem to be what's happened here." Dustin looked up to the older Mike with his eyebrows raised, wondering if he'd gotten it right.

The older Mike sighed, "That's... one explanation."

"So how do we get back?" Lucas asked.

"The question of the hour," the older Mike sighed, rubbing his temples. "But first, I'd like to go over everything that was happening before you came here. What's the last thing you guys remember?"

They all fell quiet, deep in thought. "We were... playing in the woods, when suddenly this piercing noise, like a hum, just shot through everyone's ear."

The older Mike leaned forwards, "Where in the woods, exactly?"

"Maybe a mile or two down from the lab," Lucas said, "Why?"

The older Mike didn't respond right away, but eventually he just shook his head, "Nothing. Just making sure I know everything."

"Well? Any ideas?" the younger Mike asked.

"None that seem possible," the older Mike sighed. "I may need to make a call," he said, digging through his pant pocket to pull out a similar looking device to the one Holly was using to earlier. "Or... maybe a few calls," he corrected himself.

"A few calls? To who, exactly?" Will asked tentatively.

The older Mike scoffed, waving Will off while he brought the device up to his ear. "I think you'll know them," he said. Soon, there was a voice talking on the other end. "Yeah, it's me, hey... No I'm at my parent's house right now... Well, I bet you'd never guess what Holly called me about... It's kinda hard to explain. Are you free right now?... Yeah, come over... Okay... Mhm... Right, love you too... Okay, bye." With that, the older Mike brought the device away from his ear and began dialing in a new set of numbers.

They all looked at Mike as if he had grown an extra head. "Did you just say, 'love you too?'" Lucas asked, hiding his grin.

The older Mike rolled his eyes. "I was talking to my wife," he said flatly.

The younger Mike lunged forwards in surprise. "*What?*"

The older Mike didn't answer, however, as he was already talking to another person. "Hey, you'd never guess what's happening right now," he began, speaking through what they could only assume was a telephone.

Hopefully this wasn't too confusing. I'm trying to take it a little slower so that I'll have time to fully explain and repeat the concept of what's going on properly, but at the end of the day, this is just a silly fanfic... It's all for shits and giggles, honestly.

Have a nice day, and don't forget to let me know what you thought!

-LovelySheree

4. Chapter 4

Sorry for the later update, and sorry that it's so short. I'll be finishing up finals *very* soon and then I'll have a bit more free-time. Thank you all for patiently waiting, and thank you *so much* for the kind reviews. You're all sweet-hearts!

Chapter 4

By the time the older Mike had finished his phone calls, the younger party was staring at him expectantly. As if anything he did was something completely earth-shattering. Although, who could blame them for their shocked stares? Who would've pegged Mike Wheeler, one of the biggest dorks in the entire universe, to be married by twenty-five.

And they had a pretty good idea as to *who* he was married to, even without a convenient trip to the future.

Coughing awkwardly, the older Mike addressed the group. "There are a few dozen theories to time travel," he began. "From gravity and wormholes to black holes and cosmic strings. I'm gonna take a guess and say this has nothing to do with black holes unless you guys were somehow in space before you got here. My bet's on gravity or cosmic strings," he nodded to himself knowingly.

They all continued to stare at him.

"You see, the cosmic strings idea wouldn't be all that shocking because of El. If, in theory, these 'cosmic strings' exist, they would easily have enough power to warp time—or in this case—bring you to another time-dimension. El, with her abilities, could've easily influenced these so called, 'cosmic strings' and warped you guys here," he said proudly, but still avoiding their eye-contact. They wouldn't stop *staring*. "On the other hand, gravity isn't out of the picture either—"

"I'm sorry, we're still a bit distracted on the fact that you just said you had a *wife*." Dustin spoke for the party, interrupting his friend in the

future.

"That is a thing that happens, you know. People grow up, they get married, have a life," the older Mike said flatly, still looking awkward.

Dustin nodded, "Oh yes, of course. We're just a wee bit curious as to *who* your wife may be," he amended himself, looking expectantly at the older Mike. *Staring.*

"I honestly should've kept my mouth shut," the older Mike sighed, rubbing his face. "Look, you're gonna find out anyway when she gets here, so why not we focus on the problem at hand?"

Will cleared his throat, "The issue with time travel is that it's all too theoretical, right? How are we suppose to figure out how to channel whatever happened again?" he asked, saving both Mikes from further embarrassment.

The older Mike nodded in agreement. "That's why I made those phone calls. As much as I'd like to prove I know more than anyone about anything, I need multiple opinions on this. Not to mention that you, Dustin," he gestured to the curly-haired boy, "Have gone down any and every theoretical science-related thing. This'll be right up your ally."

Dustin's eyes widened, "Me?" he asked carefully.

"No the *other* Dustin in the room," Lucas crossed his arms and gave Dustin a flat look.

"Oh, you're just jealous that future-Mike didn't call *you* to help out," Dustin fired back.

Lucas' frown deepened, "You don't know that. He made a few phone calls."

"It's true, I called him," the older Mike clarified.

Dustin turned to give the older Mike an incredulous look, "What, did you call *everyone*?"

"Pretty much," the older Mike shrugged, "It won't matter anyway, though."

"What do you mean, 'won't matter?'" This seems like a situation that would very much *matter*," Dustin stressed, gesturing wildly to the younger Mike below him, sitting on the floor, and the older Mike in front of him.

The older Mike sighed, "Don't worry about it—" suddenly there was a knock at the door. It was quickly followed by a steady turn of the door knob and the sound of crinkling paper bags as the door opened.

"Hey Mike, sorry if it took me a bit to get here. I passed the grocery store on the way here and remembered we needed some things and I decided I'd pick them up. I'll need to put some things in your parents' fridge," a feminine voice said behind two tall brown grocery bags. The older Mike stood up, walking to her, the bag still almost fully covering her face. The only thing that showed was brown hair, gently curled and combed to the side.

"Here, let me help you with that," the older Mike said while grabbing the bags.

"So, what did Holly call you about? Is she here? Her car's not in the driveway..." the voice said as the older Mike brought the bags away from her face. They all recognized her immediately.

The older Mike cleared his throat, gesturing to the group on the couch who were staring at them with their mouths open. But again, who could blame them? After all, in front of them stood a woman who looked all too familiar. She had brown hair with a gentle curl and dark brown eyes that had a way of always seemingly asking a silent question. El. The only thing that had changed about her, besides her figure, was that she was wearing glasses.

She looked at them, her eyes widening every so slightly, and her mouth just barely parting. She looked back to the older Mike, then back to the group, then back to the older Mike. "...What did you do?" she asked, her voice oddly even.

The older Mike disappeared into the kitchen to set the bags down, his

voice carrying through the short hallway to the living room and entry way. "What did I do?" I didn't do *anything*. How could I have done *any* of this?" he defended himself, "I swear! Holly just randomly called me, insisting that I come home from work. That's why I left that meeting early."

The older El's eyebrows rose, "I was wondering why you left in such a hurry. And you came here to find..." she glanced at the group who were all, still, in silent wonder, "This?"

"Crazy, right?" the older Mike said as he reappeared into the living room.

The older El blinked a few times, "Insane," was all she was able to say.

"I hope they didn't mind me leaving," he adds.

The older Eleven shrugged, "They didn't seem to bothered by it. Besides, it was all boring talk, anyway." It was silent for a moment. El stared expectantly at the group of kids and they stared expectantly back at her. "Do they talk?" she asked, looking worriedly to the older Mike.

"You're telling me, you come here to find yourself and your friends from twelve years into the past sitting on a couch, and the first thing you're concerned with is whether or not we can *talk*?" Dustin asked, finally speaking.

"Careful, that one bites," the older Mike says flatly as the older El took a step back in apprehension.

"Hold *on*, let's just take a step back here for a moment," Lucas said, waving his hands in front of his face. "So, you're Eleven from the future... And you're Mike from the future... and you guys are married?"

The older El shot a look towards the older Mike, "You told them?" she asked accusingly.

"They were looking at me funny 'cause I said 'I love you' on the phone! What was I suppose to say?" The older Mike crossed his arms,

defending himself.

"You could've said *dating* for starters, but I guess it doesn't matter now. Nor will it really matter in the long run, anyway," the older El nodded to herself.

"And what was all that talk about a 'meeting?'" Lucas continued asking.

The older Mike walked closer to the older Eleven, slinging an arm around her waist with a lopsided smile. "We work together at the old lab," he said. "After it got shut down, it was reopened by someone else in 1989... I can't tell you much more than that, though. Our work is pretty secretive."

The younger El's eyes widened. "You work for bad men?" she asked quietly.

The older Mike scoffed, "Hardly. We make sure everything's running smoothly so that nothing like what happened to you and everyone else can ever happen again."

The older El smiled softly, leaning on the older Mike's shoulder. "We protect people from the bad men, just think of it like that," she said.

Without any warning the door behind them burst open, "Mike, what the hell was that phone call? Today's my day off, and I'll be damned if—" the voice cut-off as the man froze in the doorway. All eyes landed on him. Short, curly, and brown hair was carefully styled, uncovered by a red white and blue hat. "Son of a bitch," he spoke in shock.

P.S. Future Mike and future El are a part of MiB. It's cannon. Don't look that up, but it's cannon. I'm convinced. (Except they're allowed to keep in touch with their families.)

5. Chapter 5

So sorry that this took a bit longer to post! I just kept gradually making my way through this chapter. (Also, I've not proof-read any of this so sorry in advance if there are a few mistakes.)

A special thanks to iAmCC who helped me process a few different time-travel theories to use in the story. You were a great help! Now without further ado, enjoy the latest chapter of *Stranger Things in Stranger Times*.

Chapter 5

For a brief moment, the older Mike wondered if calling Dustin was the best idea. Sure, he offered brilliant solutions and amazing theories that they'd never even heard or thought of, but currently he was just staring at the younger version of himself, holding the younger Dustin's arm and looking at it.

"D-does something happen to my arm?" the younger Dustin asked worriedly.

The older Dustin drops the arm, this time grabbing his shoulders, "This is a breakthrough. That's what this is," he said, ignoring the younger boy's question.

"You *do* know we won't be going public with this," the older Mike warns.

Dustin nods, "Of course not. But after this I'm publishing a new theory of time travel," he steps back from the younger Dustin. "The Dustainian Theory of Time Travel," he said in wonder, stretching his hands across the air for effect.

"That's a mouthful," the older El scoffed from beside the older Mike.

The older Dustin frowned at her, "Come on, El! Admit, it sounds cool," he raised his eyebrows expectantly.

The older Mike crossed his arms, "Ever since Dart, you've been dead

set on getting your name attached to anything crazy that happens to us."

"And rightfully so. Someone ought to benefit from all the shit we've gone through," the older Dustin pointed out, grinning knowingly. "Don't lie to yourself, Mike. Wouldn't *you* love to have your name associated with some ground-breaking discovery?"

"Literally anyone with a pulse would want their names tied to something amazing like that, but even so, we would actually *need* a ground-breaking discovery in order to do that. As of right now, we just have a bunch of confused kids sitting in my parents' living room," Mike stressed, "We need to figure out what the hell happened."

All eyes fell to the group of kids piled against the couch. They stared in wonder back at each other. The older Mike's mouth parted to say something, but no words came out.

Instead, the older El was the one to speak up. "How about we move into the kitchen? This entry way is getting a bit..." she frowned suddenly, looking to her side at the older Mike.

"Crowded," he offered.

"Right, *crowded*, thanks," she smiled at him, having trouble coming up with the word.

The younger Mike watched in silence at their exchange. It was strange watching himself in the future—that's obvious—but it was even stranger watching *her*. She was so eerily similar yet different at the same time. Eleven. The strange girl he found in the woods. Now she was fully grown, even *more* pretty, and so much smarter. In fact, she was so different that Mike nearly forgot it was El's future self he was so closely observing.

But then she goes and forgets a word. And the very *very* strange reality that he was somehow in crashed down on his shoulders. This was *El* twelve years into the *future*. And they were marri—No. Nope. He didn't want to think about that. Not that he was opposed or anything! It's just... he just... he couldn't think about that.

He dared to glance at the younger El who was sitting beside him still, watching in quiet wonder as the older Mike slung a lengthy arm around the older Eleven, bringing her closer to him as he gestured towards the dining room table.

"Shall we?" the older Mike asked.

"Sure," the older Dustin nodded, making his way towards the dining room. "If you don't mind, I'd like to ask a few questions," he said.

"Sure, but I'm not sure how much we'll be able to tell ya. We're about as clueless as you all are," Max sighed, standing from the couch, causing the rest of the party to stand as well.

The younger Mike still stared at El and himself from the future. As they made their way to the table, he noticed how she brought her chair closer to the "older Mike's," and how she leaned ever so slightly in his direction—something Mike never saw in his parents. Not to say that his parents didn't love each other, but... It was just different, he guessed.

The older Dustin cleared his throat, "Ahem, so... My first question is: What do you last remember?"

They all began to bombard the adults in the room with various descriptions.

"It was all the sudden really loud—"

"And bright and dizzying—"

"Kinda felt like a rollercoaster—"

"We tried to cover our ears and everything but—"

"It was *super* loud and it kept ringing in our *brains*—"

"One at a *time!*" the older Dustin spoke over them all. "How about we go in a circle, huh? Does that work for you kids?" he shook his head, "Were we really this *childish?*" he asked while looking back at the older Mike.

The older Mike raised his eyebrows as if to say "no shit," but settled on shrugging.

"They *are* children. Are you really this stupid?" the older El countered, turning the older Dustin's question back on himself, a hidden smile tucked behind her lips.

The older Dustin peered at her, "You know, I liked you better when you were quiet."

At that, the older El promptly furrowed her brows and tousled the older Dustin's neatly styled hair without moving an inch.

"Wh—what the hell!? Oh, *come on*, El! I thought we agreed on the whole, 'no using super-powers on friends' thing!" the older Dustin whined, trying to fix his hair.

The older Mike tossed his head back and let out a bark of laughter while the older El sniffled and rubbed her nose. There was no blood—not from something as simple as messing with Dustin's hair—but at this point it was almost a habit.

"Aww," the older Dustin moped, letting his head fall into his hands. "Anyway," he mumbled, lifting his head to confront the silently watching kids again, "Let's start with Will. What do you remember?"

Will raised his eyebrows, recoiling from the question. "W-why are you asking me?" he squeaked out.

"Because they were all talking over each other and you weren't. So what do you have to say about what happened?" the older Dustin quickly explained, leaning back in his chair at the table.

"Um, well...I don't know." Will sighed and tried to gather his thoughts, "They kinda said it all. We were just cutting across the woods when suddenly this terrible noise started to ring in our ears. I'm not sure about the bright part since my eyes were closed, but it *was* dizzying. And it made my stomach flip. But then it just stopped," he shrugged, "And we were here."

"Were you near the lab?" the older Dustin asked.

Will shook his head.

"You weren't doing anything out of the ordinary?" the older Dustin leaned forwards.

Will shook his head again while Lucas scoffed. "Don't you think we would've *told* you if we were doing something weird that could've caused this?" Lucas gestured around himself for emphasis.

Before the older Dustin could fire a response back at Lucas, the older Mike spoke up, "Have any of you felt anything like that before? With the bright light and the feeling of being disoriented."

"None of us do drugs," Max said flatly.

Will's eyes widened for the briefest of moments, but just enough for the older Mike to notice. "Will?" he looked intently at the young boy.

"I—I might've..." he looked around the room and then shook his head, "No, it's nothing."

The younger Mike looked to Will, gently extending a hand and resting it on his friend's shoulder. "What is it, Will?"

Will took in a deep breath, "Well, when I first went to the Upside-Down," he closed his eyes, trying to remember the haunting feeling. "I hid in the shed in my backyard... there was this crazy bright light and—and that *thing*."

"The Demogorgon," the younger Dustin mused aloud.

Will nodded. "I—I don't know if I remember any ringing, but there was just this intense... feeling," he explained. "Eerily similar to what we all felt in the woods and what must've caused us to end up here."

The older El frowned, "Do you think the Upside-Down has something to do with this, Will?"

Will shook his head, "No—I mean, I don't know. I just... know it felt similar."

The older Mike took a deep breath. "It wouldn't surprise me, honestly.

That place has it's way of keeping ahold of this damned town," he said, putting a loose arm around El. "But it's been closed off for so long. It seems random that it would only act up *now*, and even if it is acting up now, why would it?"

A knock at the door caught them all off guard. From outside a voice carried, "Mike? We're here. Will too. And why the hell are we at your parent's house?" it asked.

The older Mike stood up, removing his arm from his wife and walking to the door, "You'll see," he said loud enough for those outside to hear. "Although, I'm not sure if even *seeing* is believing this time," he mumbled, reaching for the doorknob.

The older Dustin leaned back in his chair, craning his neck to see whoever was walking through the door. "Glad you could make it, Lucas," he spoke up, "And I'd like to be the first to say that you didn't change a bit!"

There, standing in the entrance next to Mike, were Lucas, Max, and Will.

"Is this some kind of joke?" the older Max asked, awestruck.

Let me know what you thought in the comment section below! Feel free to ask questions or correct/critique anything. Hope you all enjoyed! :)

Until the next update, (which will happen so don't spam me with update requests, pls)

-LovelySheree.

6. Chapter 6

This chapter isn't as flow-y as I had hoped it to be, but oh well. This is just a cheesy story anyway.

Chapter 6

Max, the *older* Max, craned her head sharply to the side—almost unnaturally—and scrunched her face up in confusion. "Either Will's college sculpting classes kicked ass and *really* paid off, or El mastered time-travel," she said, glancing at the older Will to see him equally as baffled as her, "But considered Will's just as shocked, I'm gonna go with El and her magic tricks."

The older El nestled into the older Mike's arm again as he sat back down next to her at the table. Pushing her glasses up on her nose, she gave the older Max a wicked look. "Finally scared of me now?" she asked playfully.

The older Max hesitated for a moment, "Not *scared*," she said, "Just... intrigued."

"Wait, El, you actually figured out time-travel?" the older Will asked, perplexed.

The older El shook her head, "No, I didn't. I was being..." she furrowed her brow in thought.

"Sarcastic," the older Mike offered and she nodded while the younger Mike and younger El had a brief moment of *deja-vu*. "Actually," the older Mike began, we have no idea how any of this happened. We were discussing possible theories when you guys knocked on the door. I called you all here for help and other obvious reasons," he said, gesturing to the kids.

"The obvious reason being that there are younger versions of ourselves chillin' at your parent's dining table?" Lucas asked, his eyes wide. "Shit keeps getting crazier and crazier, I swear."

"But life would be boring otherwise, wouldn't it?" the older Dustin remarked. "You gonna join us?" he asked, pointing to the few empty seats at the table.

The older Will nodded, taking off his jacket and setting it on the chair he would be sitting in. "I could've sworn we were more talkative than this," he observed, sitting down at the table, followed by Lucas and Max.

"We're sur...prised," the younger El said quietly—speaking for the group for once.

The younger Max crossed her arms. "That's the understatement of the year. 'Surprised' isn't even the *half* of it. First off: in this time, Mike still wears old-man-sweaters, Dustin doesn't have his hat on which is just... *weird*, El is wearing glasses, Will looks super fit, and *why the hell am I wearing a turtleneck!?*" she bursted out, flailing her arms in her older-self's direction.

The older Max seemed offended, pulling at her collar. "It's a style," she said defensively.

"What, what? Fit? How?" the older Will said, looking embarrassed.

"See Lucas, I told you! That hat wasn't stupid, it was *iconic!*" the older Dustin whipped towards the older Lucas, pointing an accusing finger at him.

"What are you looking at me for? I didn't tell you to stop wearing it!" the older Lucas fired back.

The older Mike took a deep sigh, "I'm failing to see what my sweaters have to do with this—are these the questions we should be asking?"

The younger Dustin nodded, "I agree with old man Mike, we need to talk about what's really important." Everyone looked to him expectantly, "What the hell have you been *eating*, Will?"

At this both Mikes let their heads fall in their hands while both Lucas' gave Dustin a stupid look. The older Dustin, however, leaned over to nudge the older Will on the shoulder. "Your forging class sure did pay off, huh?"

"Forging class?" the younger Will echoed.

The older Will, suddenly self-conscious, quickly explained. "I'm taking a forging class at a school a few hours away. It's just for fun—it's nothing, actually."

"Do you make swords?" the younger Dustin asked, lighting up.

"That's part of it," the older Will shrugged. "D—don't we have more important things to talk about?"

The younger Dustin shook his head, "Nuh-uh, this is *exactly* what we should be talking about—"

"Yes, we *should* be talking about something more relevant. How about where we left off before Lucas, Max, and Will came for starters?" the older Mike jumped at the opportunity to steer the group back on course.

"The older versions of them, you mean," the younger Dustin corrected.

The older Mike groaned, "This is so damn confusing."

"Where'd you leave off?" The older Max asked, still secretly, but not-so-secretly, staring at her younger self who was giving her a weird look of her own.

"We think this time-travel shit has something to do with the Upside-down," the older Dustin announced, a short spell of silence following his suggestion.

"What? You've gotta be kidding, there's no *way* that's true. We dealt with that hell-hole—and I've seen one-too-many Demogorgons in my life-time—I thought this was over!" the older Lucas stressed.

"We can never fully run away from our fears," the older Eleven said in a voice just above a whisper, as if she were reminding herself of her own words.

Mike leaned over to her, kissing the top of her head and rubbing her arm comfortingly. "But we can confront them, right?" he said softly,

turning his head to address the rest of the group, "That's what courage is, after all. The ability to step into fear."

The older Max gave a low groan in response, "Oh don't go and get all 'wise' and 'inspirational' now, Mike. That'd only further your old man identity crisis."

The older Mike frowned, clearly irritated. "I *don't* have an old man identity cri—" he stopped, taking in a deep breath. "Can we *please* just stay on topic for *once*?" he seemed to plead with the group.

Will sat up, leaning onto the table, "Where did all this happen?" he asked the younger kids.

They all stared at him, "A mile or so from the lab," the younger Dustin and younger Mike replied simultaneously. "We could take you there," the younger Mike said, his gaze stealing in determination.

"What are we waiting for then, let's go," the older Max said as she stood up, followed by Lucas and Will as she headed towards the door.

"Wait!" the older Dustin shouted, "We can't all go *out* together," he said.

The older Max gave him a sideways glance, "Why the hell not, Curly?"

He stared at her as if the answer were obvious. "Seriously, you just asked me that? I dunno, *Maxine*, wouldn't you find it weird if a bunch of adults were walking down the road with a bunch of mini-clones? Yes. Because that very, *very* weird."

The older Max crossed her arms and scoffed. "Well then, what do you suggest, smart-ass?" she asked.

"Split up, for one. We'll each take a kid that *doesn't* look like us and meet up in the woods," the older Dustin suggested.

"Should we risk all of us being there? I mean, what if someone stumbles across us, or something?" the older Will asks.

"Too bad Kali's not here," The older El mumbled to herself. The

younger El flashed a curious glance her direction.

"Who?" the younger Dustin looked at the older El in confusion.

The older El waved him off briskly, "Nothing. I was only thinking out loud."

"Will brings up a good point," the older Mike sighs, "It may be a bad idea to all be there."

"Well then how will we decide on who goes and who stays?" the older Lucas asked, crossing his arms.

"I can stay back," the younger Will spoke up. "I'm kinda tired anyway," he added quietly.

"But Will, we may need you there... since you're the one who mentioned it feeling familiar to the upside down," the younger Mike turned to the younger Will.

The older Will coughed, "I can go," he said evenly, "And don't worry—I remember that feeling like it was yesterday. It never quite went away," he said sadly, looking seriously at his younger counter part, "But it gets a whole lot easier."

"We'll need El," the older Mike added, "For obvious reasons."

"Super powers," the younger Dustin mused aloud. "I'll sit this one out with Will," all eyes turned to Dustin, shocked. "Hey, I love to play detective as much as the next guy, but I'm not feeling the entire walk there and back again. Will's got it right: I'm tired too."

"I'm not sure how much help I'll be," the younger Max said honestly. "I mean, I'm pretty clueless about all this already. I'm pretty sure this adventure will just confuse me even more."

"I've got a point," the older Max agreed with her younger counterpart.

"Okay," The older Mike nodded. "Then it's decided. We'll need to split the groups in two, neither having the same person. So I'll go with El—the younger one," he suggested, looking to her for reassurance. She didn't seem opposed or optimistic, but he took it as a 'yes.' "As well as

Dustin and mini-Lucas. El," he addressed his wife, "You'll go with Will, Lucas, and mini-me."

"Sounds good," the older Will said, smiling as the older El walked over to him. "It's been a while since I've had some time with my sister, anyway."

The younger Mike followed timidly, "S-sister?" he asked in a tone that was barely above a whisper.

As they made their way to the door, those who were leaving all grouped up with their intended temporary partners. The older Mike opened the door and they all stood on the porch of his parent's house. "Okay, we need to split up. Say we meet at a mile from the lab, south-east side, about 45 minutes from now?"

The older Lucas nodded, "Sure thing."

"Be safe," The older El said, suddenly serious. Looking to her younger self, she added, "And don't be reckless with our power if anything happens, alright?"

At this, the younger El frowned looking away.

The younger Mike leaned over and whispered to the younger El. "They're right," he said softly, "It's one thing to do something in our *own* time, it's another to do something in *this* time. Besides, we promised we'd stay safe."

The younger El turned to him with a lopsided smile, "Yeah. Promise."

The older Dustin groaned, "Even *then* you two make me sick."

The older Mike rolled his eyes as he gestured towards the road. "Alright, let's go. We'll meet you back at the forest in 45 minutes."

If you enjoyed (or didn't) let me know by leaving a comment in the comment-section below!

See you next update,

LovelySheree

7. Chapter 7

Chapter 7

Okay I feel I need to put a disclaimer here... I got a few messages and then a few reviews wondering if I've abandoned the story—don't worry, I haven't! I'm just busy with school so I haven't had too much time to do this on top of my other hobbies. Please don't think I've forgotten about this story, I truly plan on finishing this!

Mike, the older Mike; tall, thin, and surprisingly quiet (Most of the walk through the woods thus far was filled with a thirteen year-old Lucas arguing about something with a twenty-five year-old Dustin). El wasn't against Mike's silence, but it simply struck her as odd. She sensed an every familiarity about him, but it seemed distant, foggy, and different. She guessed that made sense, considering this was Mike in the future.

"Is..." she started to speak, quietly so Lucas and Dustin wouldn't over hear, but loud enough to catch Mike's attention. Although, she felt she didn't have to speak up for him to hear her. "Is Mike still *Mike*?" she asked, looking at Mike's soft, but confused expression.

"Am I still the boy you know?" he asked, trying to clarify. He had almost forgotten how El had such trouble talking for a while. It reminded him how much she's grown.

"Yes," she nodded.

Mike sighed through his nose, looking forward again, ducking under a few branches. "I don't know. El—you—say that I haven't really changed much. But, then again, I'm not a kid in junior high anymore. I mean, would you say that *you're* different from a year ago?" he asked, looking back at her.

She didn't even hesitate, "I'm different now," she said, frowning slightly, "Hair."

Mike laughed in good nature, "Yes, you have hair, but have you changed in ways *other* than appearance."

"Ap-pear-ance?" she parroted.

"The way someone looks," Mike gestured to himself. "Like how I wear my 'old-man' sweaters," he mumbled that last part begrudgingly.

El hummed in understanding. "I've... changed. A lot. Hop helped," she nodded to herself.

"Then are you still 'El' if you've changed?" he asked, taking a large step over a branch and helping her over as well.

"I think so," she replied.

"Then that's my answer too," Mike smiled at her.

A loud curse and a sudden crunching of leaves was heard behind them. Both Mike and El turn their heads towards the commotion to find Dustin laying not-so-gracefully on the ground while Lucas howled with laughter.

"Twelve years and you're still as clumsy as a blind cow!" Lucas hiccuped out between gasps.

"I didn't see the root—it was covered by leaves!" Dustin growled back, standing up and brushing himself off.

Lucas fell into another fit of laughter, pointing at Dustin's head, "You've got something in your hair," he grinned.

"Aw, shit," Dustin huffed, pulling leaves out of his hair and glaring at Lucas, "And shut up, will you!?"

Mike stifled a laugh, yet somehow remained very stoic. "Dustin, the point is to remain *unnoticed*, not yell and attract the attention of everyone nearby," he said.

Dustin sighed, putting his hands up, "I know, I know. And I'm sorry, *truly*, I am. But please, Mike, believe me—this kid is worse than your nephew."

"What's wrong with my nephew?" Mike turned fully towards Dustin, giving him a look.

"N-nothing!" Dustin waved his hands, "But Mike, you gotta admit, Mike, that your nephew, Mike, is a bit—"

"Why are you saying my name so much?" Mike asked, growing more annoyed.

"Right, Mike. Sorry, Mike," Dustin shook his head, ignoring the look Mike tossed him. I just mean to say that he's a bit... much," Dustin shrugged.

"He's three, Dustin, *three years old*. How do you suppose a three-year-old is suppose to act? Like a well-mannered adult?" Mike asked, crossing his arms.

"Well that proves my point, mini Lucas is being a big Luc-ass and acting worse than a three-year-old," Dustin gestured to Lucas.

Mike groaned, "Oh, get a grip," he mumbled, turning back around. "We're falling behind. We should probably walk faster if we want to meet them at the right time."

"Wait, is that who that kid is? The one that's practically plastered all over your parents' house? Because that'd make *way* more sense." Lucas asked.

"Yeah, my mom's always been a bit obsessed with pictures," Mike sighed. The group fell into a comfortable silence as their feet crunched over the forest leaves, making their way to the meeting spot.

A few miles away, a much older "El" was having a conversation with a much older "Will" while a much older "Lucas" was walking silently beside a much younger "Mike." Confusing? I know.

"This is bringing up a lot of memories," Will said, looking at the ground.

"Bad ones, I'm assuming?" El guessed, looking at him with a tight

look in her eyes. He nodded. "They've always haunted me, but they're not as... strong as they used to be. But now, with them—with *us*—it makes it all bubble up again," she admitted, smiling hesitantly. "I just hope this doesn't start anything again."

"It won't," Will assured her. "Besides, things are different now. It's not like we're kids anymore," Will nodded, as if he were trying to convince himself as well.

"Yeah," El answered softly.

Will smiled widely, deciding to change the subject, "So is it weird to see yourself that young? Or *him* that young?"

"Yeah," she said airily, releasing a breath she hadn't meant to hold. "But isn't it for all of us?" she pointed out.

Will shrugged, "I guess that's true," he shook his head, "There are so many things I'd love to say to my younger self but I know I can't. Or rather that I shouldn't," he said.

"We've all gotta learn without being told sometimes," El recited in a terribly fake, low-sounding voice, causing Will to burst into laughter. It was something Hopper used to always tell her when she was younger.

"Nice Hopper impression," he said through his laughter.

Lucas laughed behind them as well, "It wasn't quite harsh enough, El, try again!" he said.

El waved him off, "That's all you're getting."

"I really think you should look into impersonations," Lucas continued, "You've got so much potential, in fact, I bet you'll be able to beat Mike's Yoda impression one day!" At this, they all burst into fits of laughter. All except little Mike, that is.

Ears red, arms crossed, he looked sourly at the ground. "It's not like I was *trying* for it to be a spot on impression," he mumbled.

El looked back at him with a soft smile, "Ignore us," she said, "I still

fell for you, bad impressions and all," she said with mirth, a tone Mike was not used to hearing from her.

He just stared at her in awe, frozen. His jaw was loose, and his eyes were wide as his feet continued to crunch under the leaves, listening to them continue to talk and laugh with one another. It was completely strange to see *her* so *normal*. Not to say it was bad—it definitely wasn't *bad*, it was simply different. Dream-like. And it formed an uncomfortable feeling in his gut that consistently reminded him that he was *very* out of place.

Suddenly, Will was on his knees, clenching his head, breathing abnormally. El and Lucas both rushed up behind him, saying his name over and over.

"Will! Will, are you okay? Will, can you hear us?" they asked. He kept groaning and holding his head. Mike could see the sweat forming on his back through his shirt. His mouth was open in a silent scream.

"Is this the Mind Flayer?" Mike asked, approaching cautiously.

El just shook her head, "I really hope not. If so, it wouldn't be a good sign. And we're still half a mile away from the rest of the group."

"I thought the Mind Flayer was gone," Mike said, watching in quiet horror as Will's breathing became more labored. "Is he gonna be okay?" he asked.

El nodded, "He'll be fine. This just means the upside-down is... leaking, so to speak. This may be the reason you've all ended up here."

Lucas shook Will a few times, "Will? Come on, snap out of it, man!" he said.

El closed her eyes, taking in a deep breath. "I'm going to help him," she said, placing her hand on Will's back. Lucas nodded, letting go of Will and stepping back next to Mike. Mike watched, scared quiet, as the older version of his best friend gripped the sides of his head in pain and fear.

"Is it always like this?" Mike asked hollowly, looking up at an older

Lucas. "Does Will ever get... better?"

Lucas shrugged, "I think he hid a lot of it from us for a while, but he says he's getting better. I haven't seen a break like this in *years*," Lucas mused, then nodded at Mike reassuringly. "He *does* get better. Everyone does," he finished.

Suddenly Will took a deep breath, jolting upwards as El brought her hands up in an effort to calm him. "Whoa, careful," she said softly. It was a tone that brought Mike back to the first time he heard El spoke. Her voice was so quiet, then.

Will, realizing where he was, let his head fall into his head with a heavy sigh. "Dammit," he mumbled.

El smiled sympathetically, "It's not like it's your fault, Will." She said, helping Will stand.

"How'd you do that?" Mike asked, poking into the conversation.

"I contacted him through the void," El explained.

Mike seemed to become even more confused at this, "No radio? No white noise? No blindfold?"

El shrugged, a care-free gesture that Mike was unused to seeing on her. "It's easier with people I'm closer to—so long as I close my eyes." she answered.

Will frowned, "It's still here," he said, "I'm getting flashes of it," he said, his eyes focusing on something far away.

"Just say something if it turns into something worse than flashes," El said, leading the way again.

"Flashes? You mean his visions of the Upside-down?" Mike asked.

Will nodded, "Yeah."

"Something's *really* not right here," Lucas suddenly said, walking towards a tree.

"What is it?" Will followed.

Lucas reached towards a tree, scraping a rotten-looking goo off of the bark. "Shit," he mumbled.

Will's eyes widened, looking back towards El, "This is *some* leak, El."

"I'll signal Mike," she said.

I've gotta brainstorm (and I'm busy with school) so it may be a bit before the next chapter comes out. Sorry ya'll, but there WILL be an update.

Other than that, I hope you enjoyed, and let me know what you thought!

-LovelySheree